

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 002032

SIPDIS

NEA/ARN, NEA/PPD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/03/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#), [PGOV](#), [JO](#)

SUBJECT: TFIZ01: AMIDST EMOTIONS AND ANGER, A FEW CALMER VOICES APPEAR

REF: A. AMMAN 974

[B](#). AMMAN 1685

[C](#). AMMAN 1718

[D](#). AMMAN 1949

[E](#). KUWAIT 1207

Classified By: AMBASSADOR EDWARD W. GNEHM. REASONS: 1.5 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. As we have reported, the anger of most Jordanians towards coalition military action against the Iraqi regime is obvious and unmistakable (reftels). However, as the war moves into its third week, we are beginning to see a "cooling off" among some of our contacts. One human rights contact, not known for his pro-USG-policy views, predicts that as soon as Saddam is "clearly finished," the current flaring of "Arab pride in the Iraqi resistance" will dissipate. While the rage among the vast majority continues, and the media continues to fan the flames with pictures of dead Iraqi civilians, some, particularly those in business community, are returning to a more pragmatic view of things. These individuals are focusing on how to keep businesses running and positioned to capitalize on the demise of the Iraqi regime.

[1](#)2. (C) Despite the "cooling off," even those who have accepted the reality (and the virtue) of Saddam's demise are highly skeptical of our intentions especially toward Syria, many are telling us that "people will never look at America the same way again." END SUMMARY

HR ACTIVIST SAYS ANTI-USG SLOGANS
ARE MORE "TEARS" THAN "FISTS"

[1](#)3. (C) On March 30 PolOff met with human rights activist Fawzi Samhoury (strictly protect). Samhoury has attended several professional associations organizational meetings and is in contact with opposition figures directing anti-war demonstrations. In his view, the anger against the coalition military action is "more tears than fists," and can be expected to dissipate once it is clear Saddam is finished. Samhoury said the Arab street is desperate for something, anything, to restore shattered pride, even if it is a few American casualties bannered for hours on Al Jazeera: "Saddam is not championing any real 'Arab' cause, except a display of defiance and resistance. If his resistance goes away, what does he have to offer the Arab street? I believe he is finished as soon as the Arabs realize he is finished."

[1](#)4. (C) Samhoury observed that so far, the Iraqi regime has been able to transmit its propaganda effectively to the Arab street, but said many are beginning to admit that, while both western and Arab media are "both biased toward their constituents," reality is beginning to set in. Some Jordanians are asking, among themselves, why the Iraqi regime talks about civilian deaths and American casualties but never discusses Iraqi military losses. Samhoury told PolOff "when an angry Jordanian tells you he believes the Iraqis more than he believes the Americans, he might believe what he is saying, but he also knows this is a way to insult you."

[1](#)5. (C) On demonstrations, Samhoury said the turnout and virulence is less than the April 2002 rallying during the Israeli military activity in Jenin. He said many people, particularly Palestinian-Jordanians, are less upset than they were at the Jenin "massacres." But, he noted, this may be due to the fact that people here are worn-out from two years of crises and lack the stomach or energy to take to the street en masse, especially when the GOJ has made clear it will not allow any "unlicensed" demonstrations. He also cautioned that, while the demonstrations may be weaker than expected, the anger is still there, and directly "100 percent" at America for the first time.

SOME PRAGMATISTS ARE FOCUSING ON MOVING FORWARD

[1](#)6. (C) Some, especially in the middle/upper-middle class business community, want the war to be over with so they can proceed with their endeavors (note: this appears to track with reporting from at least one other moderate Arab state -

reftel e). One young industrialist told us recently that he has truckloads of goods packaged, loaded, and waiting on trucks in his warehouse, ready to move into Iraq "the day the war is over." Another noted that some local businesses are using the war as an excuse for business losses that are more likely attributed to poor management, adding that some of his clients are using the war as an excuse to delay payments. For him, the sooner the war is over, the better.

17. (C) A successful Jordanian pharmaceutical importer said he has been more worried in the past week about how to get his colleagues to focus on the business opportunities in a new Iraq than on how many civilians have been killed or who will win the war ("The U.S. will win, no doubt"). Most Jordanian businessmen, he said, either cannot accept that Saddam Hussein will be defeated, or "see the glass half empty -- that they would profit on the bodies of dead Iraqis. I see it half full, that I can play a role in helping Iraqis rebuild their country." He recounted a story of an Iraqi friend from school who was "a real Baathi" in the 1970's. This friend "escaped" from Iraq three years ago, the businessman said, and has been recounting stories of corruption, mismanagement, and regime brutality ever since.

18. (C) An NGO contact and an academic told PolCouns this week that, while emotionally very affected by the scenes in the Arab media of civilian casualties, they understand the brutal nature of the Iraqi regime and the reasons the U.S. decided to act with military force. That said, they were uncomfortable because the U.S. "is not sending a clear message" about the ultimate goal of U.S. military action. Does the U.S., they asked, want to disarm Saddam, liberate the Iraqi people, or transform Middle Eastern governments into democracies? All of these are laudable goals which will (eventually) gain support among Arabs, if the U.S. is clear in articulating its purpose. His big fear (and that of some others we talk to) is that we will come up dry in our search for WMD. As our industrialist contact in para 6 put it, "please, please, for everyone's sake, find the chemical weapons. You have to come up with something."

WHO IS NEXT, SYRIA?

19. (C) Pragmatism aside, many of those within the small group that has begun to "cool off" emotionally tell us flatly that America will never be viewed the same way again, and its intentions will be doubted for a long time. Some are worried about "media reports" that Saddam has moved WMD into Syria. This rumor has already spun up a few to predict that "Syria will be next," or that these reports will be used by Israel as a "pretext" to reoccupy the Golon Heights, "and perhaps beyond."

THE "ANTIDOTE", ACCORDING
TO JORDANIANS

110. (C) While the presumption of bad intentions is nearly universal, most are quick to suggest the best way for the USG to regain credibility here is to move forward on the "Roadmap" with concrete steps, as opposed to "mere words." This recurring sentiment has been expressed to EmbOffs at various levels and from a wide cross-section of Jordanians.

COMMENT

111. (C) While the street will remain volatile during hostilities, and many people will likely be angry at us beyond the end of the war, a small number of Jordanians -- mostly educated and well-off -- are beginning to return to their daily lives, and think about "what's next." The business community in particular (notwithstanding the comments in para 7) has been fairly pragmatic about the disruptions of war and about the likely opportunities that will follow an end to the conflict (septels).
GNEHM